

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Washington, DC 20423

Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis, and Administration

August 7, 2006

Mr. Mike Rowsell
Freight Rail Services Manager
Washington State Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 47322
Olympia, WA 98504-7322

RE: Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project in Moses Lake,
Washington; Invitation to be Co-Lead

Dear Mr. Rowsell:

Pursuant to 40 CFR 1501.5(b), I am writing to invite the Washington State Department of Transportation (DOT) to be a co-lead agency in the preparation of an environmental review for the proposed Northern Columbia Basin Railroad Project in Moses Lake, Washington.¹

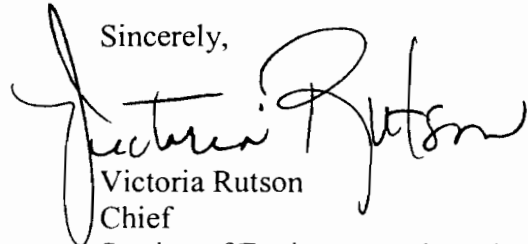
The Surface Transportation Board (Board) has been authorized by Congress to license both new rail line construction and abandonment of rail lines. Both rail line construction and abandonment are considered to be "major Federal actions," requiring environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) is responsible for conducting the environmental review process to ensure the Board's compliance with NEPA and related environmental laws.

On July 24, 2006, SEA met with Ms. Kathryn A. Kusske Floyd, an attorney representing the Port of Moses Lake (Port), regarding a number of proposed railroad improvements in the Moses Lake area. At the meeting, SEA was provided with an overview of the project, as well as maps and photographs of the area surrounding the proposed rail lines. We understand from Ms. Floyd that Washington State DOT will be conducting an environmental review of various rail improvements proposed by the Port under Washington State's equivalent of NEPA. In the interest of governmental efficiency, we would like to work together with you to prepare an environmental review that satisfies both our agencies' obligations. We believe that working together as joint or co-lead in the environmental review would ensure an efficient and effective process for our respective agencies.

¹ Federal, state, or local agencies, including at least one Federal agency, may act as joint lead agencies to prepare an environmental impact statement. 40 CFR 1501.5(b).

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Christa Dean of my staff by phone at (202) 565-1606 or e-mail at deanc@stb.dot.gov. I would appreciate a response by September 18, 2006. We look forward to working with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "V" and "R".

Victoria Rutson
Chief

Section of Environmental Analysis

cc: Kathryn A. Kusske Floyd, Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw L.L.P.
Craig Baldwin, Port of Moses Lake